

5th Page for "Principal" read "Principa...

6th do for "Bethreda" read "Bethreda

for "ascunder" read "ascunder"

JACOB'S SERVICE...

A Word to the Lord's Servants

In reading the history of Jacob's service with Laban, we cannot fail to notice the marked contrast between both the motive and effect of his service during the first two periods of seven years each and of the same during the last period of six years.

Jacob had taken the place of a servant with his uncle and, as such, became responsible to render faithful service "to his own master." He had a great incentive to render faithful service. He loved Rachel—Rachel the beautiful. To Laban's question, "What shall thy wages be?" how readily he responded, "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel." There was no hesitancy, nothing to indicate that he could, by any means, be persuaded to accept other wages. His heart was bound with a chain from which he desired no freedom. From the beginning love was the motive power for his service.

What matters now the scorching days, the frosty and sleepless nights? Are not even weariness and suffering overshadowed by the joy that is his in the anticipation of the final attainment of Rachel—the object of his

heart's desire and love. And though, through the deceitfulness of Laban, disappointment awaited him at the fulfilment of his term, he readily undertook to repeat the same service that he might gain the object of his affection.

When the fourteen long years of faithful service were ended Laban looked with satisfaction on his vastly increased flock and, after requesting Jacob to remain with him (so much did he appreciate his faithfulness) he added "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blest me for your sake." Nor was this the only result of his fourteen years service. It was during this period that Jacob was blest with children, not strange children, but children whose names were afterwards borne on the shoulders and breast of Israel's High Priest. The spiritual significance of these things is so readily seen that comment seems almost unnecessary.

What was it that enabled the apostle Paul to endure as he did? He gives us the answer, "The love of Christ constraineth us." What though persecutions, stripes, imprisonment and various other afflictions were his portion. It was for Him.

What, though he was misrepresented and misunderstood by his own children in the faith; They were the

Lord's redeemed ones and, because they were His, he would endure all things for their sake. His present portion—the love of Christ filling his soul, the joy of fellowship with Him and the knowledge that he would receive the approval of his Lord in that day—these things kept him going on in the path of faithful service. And as he looked on the result of his service, his heart being filled with thankfulness for the grace which condescended to use him, what fatherly pleasure and joy would be his portion. To Timothy he could say, "My genuine child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2; Newberry Margin). To the Corinthians, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you, through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15), and to the Thessalonians, "Ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:20).

Beloved in Christ, have we known this path? Do we know this path? What do we know of the travailing in birth, and travailing again, if need be, for the children of God? Do we know the longings, the earnest expectations, the disappointments, and the reviving hopes attendant on real soul exercises before God on behalf of souls, whom we desire to see saved? Do we know that earnest care for the welfare of God's flock, that He puts into the hearts of those who

seek, not their own, but are willing to spend and be spent for the sake of the sheep? And then, when the morning of deliverance comes, what a joy it brings. Is this our present experience, or have we to ransack the shelves of memory in order to find it? May we search our hearts before God regarding this matter.

But, alas for Jacob, his years of faithful service came to an end. The flock of his lawful master increased no longer, either in numbers or strength. The drought by day and the frost by night were still endured by him but with a different motive behind, and a different object before him. Self-seeking—covetousness—the desire and labor to put certain markings on the sheep so that he could claim them as his own—these were the characteristics of his latter years of service. There was a greater manifestation of the “skilfulness of his hands” than in the first two periods, but “the integrity of his heart” had vanished.

See that once faithful servant behind a clump of bushes or in some secluded hollow, with a bundle of rods, gathered wherever he could find them, industriously peeling the same, prior to putting them into the drinking troughs. He would not have gained his object if he had put the

rods in the troughs as God made them. No doubt he had learned by experience how to produce the desired effect. It may be he persuaded himself that his object was right, (let no man deceive himself), and acted on the principal that "The end gained, justifies the means used."

The flock is no longer "one flock." Jacob's skillful work had divided them. He can look on the larger and stronger portion and can say "They are mine." Not only so, he boldly claimed that he was having companionship with, and getting visions from God, and he so represented things to his family as to lead them to believe that the increase in his flock was due to Divine intervention on his behalf. "Is he not rightly named Jacob?"

One shrinks from exposing, in all its detail, the parallel as seen in some of the assemblies of God today (the wise will understand) and yet in view of the present condition of things we feel that we cannot put down the pen without **mentioning** at least one principal advocated by many who desire recognition as shepherds over the flock of God, which principal is producing division among His people.

We look back on happy days when relationship to God and His word

settled the question as to whether a person was worthy of a place in the assembly of God; yet how different is the custom today in many of the assemblies where the applicant for fellowship is met with a problem like this: "We have given our judgment against certain persons and certain assemblies; will you accept, abide by and uphold these judgments? If so, we will receive you; if otherwise, you can have no place among us." The attitude of the applicant toward these judgments forms the basis upon which he is accepted or rejected. Every precious tie which binds him to the Lord and the Lord's people is ignored, and a person who does not accept their judgments will find to his grief, that, for him, the pool called Bethesda (house of mercy) is as far from the "sheep gate" as the poles are assunder.

Were the question a matter of immoral practice or evil doctrine these brethren would receive our warmest support; but we must deplore and condemn that principle wherein assembly troubles which should be settled locally by the assembly directly involved, are made the occasion of division throughout the land. According to this unscriptural principle whenever a matter comes up for judgment in any assembly, no matter

how small or remote that assembly may be, there is immediately thrown into the balance the fate of all other assemblies in reference to their relation to each other. Does God hang the unity of his people on such frail threads? We have no doubt as to the answer.

In time past the truth contained in Matt. 18:20, was regarded as standing in the same relationship to our gathering together as John 3:16 stands in relationship to the gospel. Just as it was recognized that the gospel of God was contained (in a nutshell) in the latter, so God's principle of gathering was seen in the former. But now, in many assemblies the basic principles of our gathering together are reasoned out from the truths contained in Deut. 12 to 15, which truths relate to the ceremonial worship of God's earthly people. While we see very many points of comparison, as we view the ways of God with His earthly and heavenly people respectively, we also notice a striking contrast.

In the past dispensation the faithful Israelite looked up to a certain place—the place of God's appointment, and said "there must I appear before Jehovah;" "there must I bring my offerings," etc; but now, the Lord Himself—our living, loving Lord—

looks down to see the little companies drawn together by the power and love of His Name, and, seeing them so gathered, verifies His word, "There am I in the midst of them."

If we go back to the law for our foundation principles, can we marvel if the spirit of the law adheres to them, and, together with these principles, finds its way into our hearts? And if this is so (and it is so) can we wonder at the result produced? "The letter killeth," as many of the Lord's people have proved to their cost. May God lead us back once again into the early simplicity of His ways as the writer knew them over forty years ago.

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